English 90—Yanover

Essay #2: Self-Portrait (Description) Essay

Value: 150 points

Length: 1,000 words (minimum), 8 paragraphs

Format: MLA style, typed, double-spaced

Due: Typed, double-spaced rough draft (6 paragraphs minimum) due for peer review Thursday, 2/13 and for conference the following week. Bring a fresh copy of the essay for me to review. (15-point deduction if peer review or the conference is missed.)

Final draft (revision and expansion) due Tuesday, 2/25

Note: Before turning your final draft in, make sure your essay has a creative title. Also, proofread and spell check (grammar and spelling count).

Topic:
In this essay, you will be writing a self-portrait and discussing how (your) identity is communicated.

To help focus this discussion, you will be examining and comparing photographs of yourself: your photo ID (student ID or driver's license) and snapshots or portraits (such as a yearbook or wedding photo) of yourself. What impression of your identity does each photo give? Be sure to describe yourself in the photo and point out how it creates the impression. Then, consider how accurately or completely each of these photographs represents you. Also, consider which you prefer, and why.

You will also discuss how else you communicate who you are to the world (family, friends, employers, strangers, etc.) and who gets the most complete and authentic picture of you? Why? What method of communication best captures the "real" you? Again, why?

You will incorporate discussion of at least one other writer's beliefs about photography and the communication of identity.

Paragraph #1 Outline: from Introduction of the Topic to the Thesis

Step #1: Introduce the topic: your thoughts about how identity is communicated to the world or simply your thoughts about your own identity and how accurate a picture of you other people get and why.

So consider trying one of the following methods:

> 1) Start with a broad thought about identity and how we communicate it; then narrow to yourself and how you think the world sees you or gets to know you.
> OR 2) Begin by telling a story about yourself that will **show** who you are or how you think the world sees you.
> OR 3) Try a contrasting idea. For example, do people often come to the wrong first impression of you? Start with the misperception or with your thoughts about first impressions followed by one or more particular misperceptions of you.
> OR 4) You might start by describing one of the photos, so the reader can picture it whether it gives a true or false impression of you. If true, it'll lead right in to your thesis. If false, it can serve as a contrasting idea. Either way, you'll need some explanation as a transition from the opening into the thesis itself.
> OR 5) You might start by presenting another writer's beliefs about identity and respond to his/her beliefs with discussion of your own beliefs and introduction of yourself and finally your thesis.
> Note: Do make sure the intro leads to and prepares the reader for your thesis. But do **not** reveal your thesis until you present it at the end of the paragraph. Also, do **not** list the points you'll make in your body paragraphs in the introduction.

Step #2: Add background or develop the ideas you introduce, leading the reader to your thesis.

Step 3: Present the thesis statement as the last sentence of the first paragraph. It should answer one of the following two questions:

Who are you?

OR What kind of person are you?

Some tips for your thesis statement:

> 1) **Be specific.** Avoid vague words like unique, different, one-of-a-kind, or individual. Of course, you're unique and different from everyone else. Each of us is. What makes this vague is that it doesn't tell us what makes you unique or different or what kind of individual you are. As another example, instead of a word like nice, choose a word that indicates a particular kind of niceness (Do you mean that you're kind, soft-hearted, compassionate, considerate, or polite? etc.)
>
> 2) **Focus on one overall idea about yourself.** This doesn't mean use just one word, but avoid listing unrelated traits. This is not going to be a 5-paragraph essay where you deal with one trait per paragraph and then neatly wrap it up in the conclusion. Also, you don't have to cover every aspect of your identity and can't in so short a paper (even after expanding it to 8 paragraphs).

Types of Body Paragraphs:

Type A Paragraph: Show us who you are with examples of interests, activities, etc., that demonstrate the kind of person the thesis says you are.

Type B Paragraph: Tell us what your picture says about you.

What does your picture ID say about you?

What does your snapshot say about you?

Type C Paragraph: Present what a writer of one of the essays we've read believes about the communication of identity through photography, etc.

Body Paragraph Type A Outline:

Step 1: Begin the paragraph with a POINT (one particular trait related to but different from the thesis that describes you. It could be an activity or interest, but do make sure you will have at least 3 examples to support/describe it).

Step 2: Next, SUPPORT the point by presenting examples (primary support) that directly illustrate that point and by adding specific details about each example (secondary support). Your secondary support should both describe the example, giving details about you, so we get a vivid picture of you, and explain the examples and details, what they mean, how and why they prove the point.

Step 3: Finally, connect back to the thesis and develop it. Add to our understanding of the thesis: Explain how/why this point proves you're the kind of person the thesis says you are. Explain too what it means to be this kind of person.

Body Paragraph Type B Outline:

Step 1: Begin the paragraph with a POINT (one particular trait related to but different from the thesis) that the photo suggests about you.

Step 2: Next, SUPPORT the point by presenting examples (primary support) seen in the photo that directly illustrate that point and by adding specific details about each example (secondary support), again seen in the photo. Your secondary support should both describe the example—giving details about the photo of you, so we get a vivid picture of how you look in the photo—and explain the examples and details, what they mean and how and why they prove the point (the way you seem in the photo).

Step 3: Finally, connect back to the thesis and develop it. Add to our understanding of the thesis: Explain how/why this point/photo proves you're the kind of person the thesis says you are. Explain too what it means to be this kind of person.

Body Paragraph Type C Outline:

Step 1: Begin the paragraph with a POINT about one of the articles you read. Do identify the "Title of the Article" and the author's full name (after which you may return to him or her by his or her last name only). This point should identify one idea the author is presenting about identity or about how photography communicates or distorts identity.

Step 2: Next, SUPPORT the point by presenting examples (primary support) from the article that directly illustrate that point and by adding specific details about each example (secondary support). Your secondary support should both describe the example, giving details and possibly a quotation from the article and explain the examples and details, what they mean, how and why they prove the point.

Step 3: Finally, connect back to the thesis and develop it. Add to our understanding of the thesis: How does this author's ideas about identity or photography relate to the ways you communicate (or fail to communicate) your identity.

Conclusion Outline:

Step 1: Begin by reminding us of the thesis. Don't just repeat the same exact sentence (try commenting on the main idea rather than restating it), but do use the same trait or an obvious synonym.

Step 2: Next, develop the thesis fully, exploring your identity, how you communicate it, how truthfully, and how much of it, to whom, and why.

Step 3: Draw the essay to a conclusion. You might discuss other aspects of your identity or look into the future to how you will be known then or how you imagine you will see your past self then. You might instead or in addition discuss identity in general. How well do you think we can know anyone? Consider too the implications of your answer (for how we judge people, choose friends, etc.).